THE BOWERY GIRL

AMONG THE MUMMERS

CLARA WIELAND

VIOLA ALLEN

MICHAEL AND HIS LOST ANGEL

DEYO - EXCELSIOR JR.

MARIE STUDHOLME

MILK WHITE FLAG

CHIMMIE FADDEN

BY ALAN DALE

Henry Arthur Jones, the author of "Michael and His Lost Angel," now at the Empire Theatre, is probably in a chronic condition of chuckling in his sleeves as he listens to the cacophonic brou-haha, to which his plays invariably give rise. Henry Arthur rolls one eye in the direction of heaven, and inspects all the joys of the celestial regions; the other he keeps riveted upon the—box-office. Even while he is talking of souls and affinities and peace forever, and all that sort of thing, you know that the tintinnabulations of the merry coins that come into the treasurer's hands are sweetest music to him.

He is the canniest playwright of the age, because he always succeeds in giving the public food for discussion. He apes the role of the man with a mission so successfully that you cannot distinguish the assumption from the reality. And the reality is that Mr. Jones is a tricky and a diplomatic juggler. The public sees none of the tinsel that flecks the efforts of Henry Arthur. The public regards him as a Bunthorne, and sings, "What a very, very singularly deep young man, this deep young man must be."

Ibsen never considers the box-office, and that is why his metaphysical problems have never attained popularity. Ibsen believes in his own preachings. Henry Arthur Jones would believe in anything that would afford him theatrical situations. All is fish that comes to his net. He sweeps in everything available—politics, religion, strange cults, odd fads, hobbies, cherished beliefs—all. He poses as a remarkably learned gentleman, and reading his book, "The Renascence of the English Drama," the other day, I came across the following passage, in an essay entitled "The Bible on the Stage," which is somewhat interesting, in view of the production of "Michael and His Lost Angel:"

"So far as doctrines and dogmas are concerned," says Henry Arthur, "the stage need not for a moment trouble itself about them. The drama has a larger sway and sphere than any doctrine or creed, a more instant appeal to the heart." (Ahem!) "In presence of the great verities of the soul" (M'yes), "in presence of such tremendous issues as are raised in 'Faust' and 'Macbeth' and 'Agamemnon,' all the cobwebs that were ever spun by priests to veil the Infinite are blown into air and nothingness. Zeus or Jehovah, Prometheus or Christ, Buddha or Mahomet, Satan or Furies, Calvin or St. Francis, Newman or Wesley, Rome or Jerusalem, Westminster Abbey or Little Bethel—the drama neither defends nor decries them, neither affirms nor denies them, neither blesses nor curses them, but uses them as it wants them, accepts all their shibboleths, gives them currency, and smiles at them. The drama has to do with realities, not with words. What has Shakespeare to do with the Reformation? What has our modern drama to do with the stale, withered husks that our two hundred sects fodder themselves on?"

This is a lucrative view to take. That is why Henry Arthur Jones takes it. If the opposite view were equally profitable, Mr. Jones would clutch at that. Mr. Jones is not in the "playwriting business for his health," as the ugly phrase goes. I have always blamed him as a poseur.

He is the Talmage of the drama, sensationally addressing his thousands with earthy, secular eloquence; he is a swimmer in a pellucid stream, with one foot dragging along the muddy bottom; he is an angel, soaring no higher than the housetops, with cheap wings, at perhaps $1.98 a pair—warranted to last as long as he will want them—and he meets the requirements of the day, which are neither lofty nor abstruse. He carries the bells of the mountebank, and they tinkle pleasingly in our ears.

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"Michael and His Lost Angel" however, is undoubtedly the most human play he has ever written. Those who object to seeing a priest placed in such a grossly sexual predicament as that in which the Rev. Michael Feversham found himself, must nevertheless admit that priests have been there. The picture is not improbable. Clergymen, moreover, have frequently attacked and are constantly attacking the stage and its people. The stage and its people can scarcely be blamed for retaliating by showing the frailty, under ardent circumstances, of the gentlemen of the cloth.

Mr. Jones has studied his subject very carefully. He must have read scores of books on psycho-pathology. There is a curious analogy between religion and love. We know that. A well-known writer says: "Sexual episodes were frequent in the lives of the saints. Powerful sensuality expresses itself in the history of religious fanatics, and in what revolting scenes, true orgies, the religious festivals of antiquity, no less than the 'meetings' of certain sects in modern times, express themselves—to say nothing of the lustful mysteries that characterized the cults of the ancients."

The Rev. Michael Feversham was ripe for just such a fall as that he suffered in Jones's new play. He was an ascetic; a total abstainer from the flesh-pots of the world, and Audrie Lisden came upon him at a critical time, and begged him to brave hell for her sake. It was a most audacious situation; one that will affront hundreds of well-regulated people, but Mr. Jones does not object to lacerating the sensibilities. It causes talk, and talk is advantageous. The departure of the boat, leaving Audrie alone on St. Decuman's Island with the poor little minister, was a dangerous episode. Had it been insisted upon with one atom more emphasis, ladies would have left the theatre in disgust. I understand that it was insisted upon a great deal more forcibly in London, but that the incident was toned down here.

Don't pretend that you feel no interest in this culpable pair. I defy you to sit through the play of "Michael and His Lost Angel" wrapped in a coat of indifference The love passages stir the blood, because both the lovers are so interesting. The character of the priest is capitally drawn—no minister need feel that he has been held up to derision—while Audrie Lisden is a fascinating creature, who literally throws herself at him.

Fate decides things for them. Fate causes that boatless evening; that enforced sojourn on St. Decuman's Island, and I can't help thinking that, shocking though it may be, it is a deft incident. It is eminently theatrical, of course. It is thoroughly Henry Arthur Jones-y. You can find similar, though milder theatricalism in "The Dancing Girl," "Judah," "The Middleman," "The Case of Rebellious Susan" and "The Masqueraders."

The picture episode in the first act made me laugh. Michael—"they called me Mike when I was a boy," he tells her—keeps a step ladder in the vicarage parlor, just below the portrait of mommer, who is his "good angel." To see this goodly gentleman mounting the ladder in order to kiss mommer's photographed brow is ludicrous. The defunct lady looks like a Madonna, and she must have been about fifteen years of age when Mike was born. When Audrie comes to the vicarage she also wants to kiss mommer's picture.

"No," he says, sternly. "You are my bad angel. I cannot allow you to kiss her."

She pleads. She persists. "I must kiss her," she almost sobs.

"I cannot allow it."

"Then let me hold her in my hand," she entreats.

This reminds me again of Bunthorne.

"You had a mother," says Grosvenor, tenderly.

"Never!" cried Bunthorne, indignantly.

"But"—insinuatingly—"you had an aunt?"

"Ah, yes; boo-hoo!" and the miserable Bunthorne burst into tears.

Audrie Lisden finally succeeds in kissing mommer's picture. She frou-frous up to the step ladder, rustles up the steps, and does the fatal deed. Then she descends tauntingly, and edges her way to the door. "Your bad angel has kissed your good angel," she remarks, and the curtain falls. This will probably be altered before "Michael and His Lost Angel" is very much older. It must be altered, for it is very silly. It is the only stupid feature of the play. The audience tittered at it Monday night, for it dimned the lustre of the Rev. Mike and his fair accomplice.

Viola Allen and Henry Miller may both be congratulated for their excellent work in this play. Miss Allen never fails, whether it be in the namby-pamby heroine part of "Liberty Hall," or the subtle and insidious role of Audrie Lisden. She is good in all things, like the nice little boy in the story book. Miss Allen is the best "leading lady" that New York has to-day, and it looks as though she would maintain that position indefinitely. Henry Miller's unyielding demeanor served him in good stead in this play. Miller is a stodgy and a stagey actor, but his characteristics fitted this role admirably. I can't believe that Forbes Robertson and Marion Terry in London were as successful as Henry Miller and Viola Allen.

Still, I would suggest to Miss Allen that she die a little more rapidly. I know it is a great temptation to the ordinary actress to hold the centre of the stage, to gurgle and rattle, and see things before being gathered to her foremothers. The audience, however, is slightly weary of the enlightened gloom of "Michael and His Lost Angel" before Miss Allen begins to enjoy herself shuffling off. If she could only die behind the scenes it would be a great treat.

For the benefit of those who have not read Maxwell Gray's novel, "The Silence of Dean Maitland," from which it has been hinted that Henry Arthur Jones culled his play, I will say that the only point in common between the book and the play is the confession of the Church. In Maxwell Gray's book Cyril Maitland is the tempter. He ruins a young country girl, conceals his guilty knowledge, sees his friend condemned to penal servitude for twenty years for having murdered her father, grows famous, and is finally confronted by her child—his child. Then he confesses his crime, and also pleads guilty to having caused the death of the father in an altercation.

"The Silence of Dean Maitland" is a fascinating story, but it is not as engrossing as "Michael and His Lost Angel."

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Doesn't it seem absurd to drop from "Michael and His Lost Angel" to "Chimmie Fadden?" The life of the dramatic critic is full of chills and shocks. Do you wonder that at times his mind gets out of tune; that he is jangled and inharmonious, plunging Turkish-bathily from the hot room of agony into the tank of cold triviality?

Chimmie, however, is in town, and Mike will not scare him. He is at the Garden Theatre, with Small Bottles, and Kramer the grocer, and Kelly "der barkeep," and Goldstein the pawnbroker, and "His Whiskers," to say nothing of the beautiful Fanny and the brittle-Englished Duchess.

Chimmie is the Bowery boy as we would like him to be, but as he isn't. Edward Townsend has created him in the form he would like him to assume, for the sake of chatty fiction and entertaining comedy, and Mr. Townsend has done well. Chimmie is no more like the real Bowery boy than the feminine sketches in the Vie Parisienne are like the real Parisians. These are the work of clever French artists, who feel that they can endow a type with life if they can furnish it with picturesque imaginary characteristics. So it is with Chimmie Fadden. The real Bowery boy would probably revolt us on the stage. We might go to look at him once, but we should never repeat the visit. The real Bowery boy is in no wise different from the real Whitechapel boy or the real gamin of the Rue du Temple in Paris. He ought to be, but he isn't. For the reason that he isn't, it is quite fitting that a gentleman with an imagination should step in and paint him amusingly. The Bowery boy will go to see Chimmie Fadden, and the Bowery boy will imitate him. He will seize upon the traits that Mr. Townsend has so entertainingly sketched, and he will probably assimilate them with his own, which are very different. Swipesey and Petey will get many points from Chimmie Fadden, "as he is," at the Garden Theatre, for Swipesey and Petey will see what they are supposed to be, and they will try to live up to the model.

There is not the least harm in the world in these imaginary pictures. In fact, they are positively beneficial to the community. New York lacks types. It is eminently type-less. People in this city are all very much of a muchness, and the novelist is at a loss for characters. As they do not exist, they must be invented, and the imaginary creations will have an influence. If "Chimmie Fadden" proves to be very popular—and it richly deserves to be so—we shall have real Chimmie Faddens everywhere, and ten years from to-day the type will exist.

Men and women are splendid copybooks. They receive exact impressions of objects written upon them, and they give forth these impressions manifolded. Fashions are set in this way. Once let a popular actress go through a part with an almost imperceptible limp, and that almost imperceptible limp will find its way into the highways and byways of the city. I will venture to say that the stage idea of making the fast young women smoke cigarettes has introduced this weed to hundreds of maidens who otherwise would never have touched it. The stage dude—a purely imaginary affair—has passed into real life. We see him everywhere—in the playhouses, in the lobbies of the hotels, at receptions, at dances, at suppers. Unconsciously, he is imitating the type that has been exaggerated by the fertile playwright. He does not know that this has influenced him. But it has.

We need types, and why shouldn't we have one in the Bowery, the only thoroughfare in New York that one might accuse of originality? Mr. Townsend has done a noble deed in furnishing us with a Bowery boy who will set the fashion for countless other ambitious Bowery boys, at present suffering from a total lack of color. Such a play as "Chimmie Fadden" merits a long life, not as a picture of things as they are, but as a picture of things as they are not, but should be.

Nobody ever saw a "tough girl" until Ada Lewis painted her for us. Miss Lewis studied the dank and uninteresting Bowery maiden, improved her, sketched in some amusingly imaginary touches, and—captured us all! We really believed that the "tough girl" had been alive all these years, and that we had never seen her until Miss Lewis brought her before our eyes. The "tough girl" exists today, thanks to Miss Lewis. The Mamies and the Sadies of the Bowery saw her impersonation, and without any doubt they have unconsciously imitated her.

Who shall say that the stage has no mission? It holds the mirror up to Nature, but it is a flattering and an agreeable mirror that makes its reflections ten times more entertaining than the original. "Chimmie Fadden" will amuse us for a long time, and the longer it stays in New York the more acutely will its influence be felt. It is a very jolly and hilarious affair, and it is very well acted. Charles H. Hopper as the Bowery boy is a whole fund of amusement in himself, and Miss Marie Bates has undoubtedly made the "hit of her life." I was delighted with the charm and ingenuousness of Miss Carrie Keeler, a young woman of whom we shall probably hear more anon.

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They tell me that Nat Goodwin is going to play "The Prisoner of Zenda" in Australia. He will not have to wear a wig. His locks are very nearly of the requisite Elphberg tint, and I am not surprised that he should hanker after interpreting this play, even in the Antipodes. The Australian rights of "The Prisoner of Zenda" have been secured by Messrs. Williamson & Musgrove, under whose management this comedian will visit Melbourne and Sydney.

Goodwin is sick of comedy, because—forsooth!—he has grown rich on it. He craves emotional work, in which he is distinctly and unremittingly ill at ease. That is the way of the actor folks. I have no doubt but that if you asked De Wolf Hopper to play Romeo to the Juliet of May Robson, both Mr. Hopper and Miss Robson would be charmed. It is no use reasoning about this perversity. It is innate in the actor. Nat Goodwin insisted upon inflicting "David Garrick" upon us at the Fifth Avenue Theatre, and he is going to do just that style of work in Australia. There, of course, he is not known as a comedian, so that he will have nothing to live down.

He is to open his season in "A Gilded Fool," and he will stay in Australia during the months of July, August and September. The engagement will be watched with great interest, for Messrs. Williamson & Musgrove are casting eyes at John Drew, E. H. Sothern and William H. Crane. These actors will await the result of Goodwin's trip before compromising themselves.

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There was a burlesque performance of "the notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith" called "Too Much Mrs. Ebbsmith" at the Lambs' Club the other day, and John Hare was the "guest of the evening." Later on a rather startling story floated around Broadway to the effect that Wilton Lackaye had made an extremely anti-English speech, in which he had condemned the club for entertaining Mr. Hare; furthermore, that the English actor had been so exceedingly hurt at the attack that he had put on his bonnet and shawl and departed in high dudgeon.

I believed the story myself, because I know that Mr. Lackaye is an unamiable gentleman, who would spout just such sentiments even at his own club. Mr. C. T. H. Helmsley, Hare's manager, however, informed me that the English actor left the club ahead of the other guests, for the reason that his health is bad, and that he has been so exceedingly entertained of late that the strain is telling upon him. Moreover, it is asserted that Hare enjoyed himself immensely, and replied to Mr. Lackaye's bantering remarks on the subject of English actors crossing the ocean for American dollars with light and frothy indifference.

John Hare is such an affable, unassuming gentleman that it is not easy to see how he could have an enemy in the world. He ended his engagement at Abbey's Theatre last night, and his delectable work as Benjamin Goldfinch in "A Pair of Spectacles" quite obliterated all memories of the rancid and mildewed "Mrs. Ebbsmith." If Hare is wise he will not try to foist that notorious lady upon the out-of-towners. "A Pair of Spectacles" was remarkably successful in this city, and it will probably meet the same fate "on the road."

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At the Lyceum Theatre new scenery has been painted and new costumes made for a revival of "The Prisoner of Zenda" at that house, with the stock company in the cast instead of the members of E. H. Sothern's organization. Daniel Frohman evidently has unlimited faith in the power of this play. The revival will cost just as much as the original production, and it is not often that a manager feels impelled to reproduce a play just after it has been withdrawn from his boards.

"The Prisoner of Zenda" will be useful to kill the memories of "The Benefit of the Doubt." It will have the effect of a pure and penetrating disinfectant. Its breezy, historical audacity will be a splendid tonic after the enervating, feverish comedy that Pinero sent us. I shall be glad to welcome it back to New York. It is the best play that the season has given us so far, for it is simple relaxation and entertainment. I don't believe that E. H. Sothern will be very severely missed from the cast, but that is a point in which mere belief counts for little.

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Alas! for the poor actor-manager in New York. What gorgeous predictions were made when Richard Mansfield took possession of the Garrick, and Nell Burgess placed himself in the managerial chair at the Star Theatre. New York was going to emulate the example of London. New York was going to demonstrate the fact—as London has done—that the man who can successfully head his own company is the man best fitted to manage his own theatre. How paragraphically jubilant we waxed! How cacklingly jocund were our prophecies!

The result of the two experiments has been deplorable. The story of Nell Burgess is, in fact, tear-washed. Mr. Burgess invested nearly $100,000 in the Star Theatre in order to produce a new play called "The Year One," which he felt convinced would run for three or four years. Nobody lured him to his fate. Nobody advised him on the subject. It was his own idea, born of enthusiasm, plus a bank account. Burgess paid $40,000 bonus to Theodore Moss and he spent something like $56,000 on decorating the old theatre. "The Year One," as you will remember, was a ghastly and an utterly hopeless failure, and Burgess now starts on the road for a sixteen weeks tour with "The County Fair."

He cannot take his $56,000 of decorations and improvements away with him. They stick to the walls and they are riveted to the floor. He must leave them for some other fellow to enjoy. And so it is with Mansfield. He cannot cart his Pompeiian room away from the Garrick Theatre or tear down the crimson hangings and carmine fixings. It is a hard-earned money pitifully frittered away. The case of Nell Burgess, however, is far sadder than that of the inflammatory Mansfield. Burgess has worked hard for years. He accumulated a fortune by saving his money. His bank account grew gradually after his unostentatious engagement at Tony Pastor's Theatre about ten years ago. He watched it lovingly, and his wife fostered it carefully.

Nothing tempted him—but the old Star Theatre. He was tempted, and he fell, and now it will be years before he can hope to recuperate. Yet everything looked very bright for him a few months ago. He had attained the summit of his ambition. His friends applauded. Bang! and the degringolade was accomplished.

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Richard Mansfield, brought to bay at last by the idiocy of his own advertisements, hoist by his own petard, is vastly indignant at the flames he has fanned into life. Now, he denies everything. He is the Barbara Aub of the dramatic profession—just as unbalanced and as egotistical as that feminine nine-days' wonder. If we wait long enough he will retract his denials, and admit everything effervescently. And then—if the papers can still be counted upon for space—he will re-deny. Of course this condition of things cannot possibly last long. There is a limit to even the patience of journalists. Mr. Mansfield has behaved himself ridiculously for many years, but the idea that he was a genius, and that he was merely indulging in the purely fictitious eccentricities of genius, gave his aberrations interest. A painful fact is gradually dawning upon us. Mr. Mansfield is not a genius. We have been waiting for that divine spark for many moons—waiting patiently and courageously. It has failed to manifest itself. Mr. Mansfield has been eccentric upon false pretences. We want no more of it. We clamor for his alleged genius, and until we get it we don't care a rap whether he insults the people of Atlanta or the people of Timbuctoo. In the height of the telegraphic fever caused by Mansfield's dispatches anent his lecture tour, and the denial of his lecture tour, and his threatened engagement at the Garrick, and lots of other things, I spied his personal agent, William McConnell. I thought that he would be able to settle things for me.

"Mr. McConnell," I began airily, "what is Richard Mansfield going to do next season?"

McConnell loked at me for an instant, and then remarked laconically, and with plaintive smilelessness: "Not me."

ALAN DALE.